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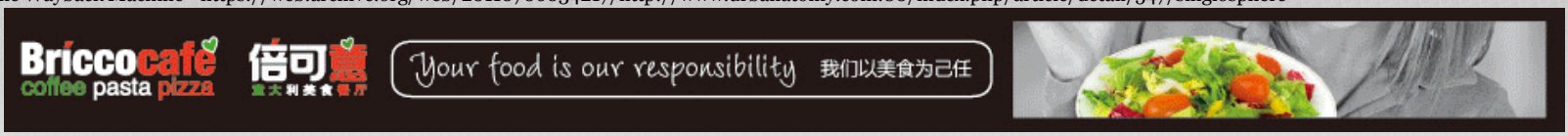

Singlosphere

by nickland @ Thursday, 26 May 2011 12:23

East-plus-West at the frontier of freedom

In accordance with the widely-held belief that digital communication technologies 'destroy distance', James C. Bennett coined the term 'Anglosphere' to describe the arena of comparatively frictionless cultural proximity binding spatially-dispersed Anglophone populations. His contention was that the gathering trends exemplified by the development of the Internet would continue to promote cultural ties, whilst eroding the importance of spatial neighborhoods. In the age of the World Wide Web, cultural solidarity trumps geographical solidarity.

Whilst alternative culture-spheres – expressly including the Sinosphere – were mentioned in passing, they were not the focus of Bennett's account. His attention was directed to English-speaking peoples, scattered geographically, yet bound together by threads of common understanding that derived from a shared language, English common law and limited-government traditions, highly-developed civil societies, individualism, and an unusual tolerance for disruptive social change. He predicted both that these commonalities would become increasingly consequential in the years to come, and that their general tenor would prove highly adaptive as the rate of social change accelerated worldwide.

Bennett's concern with large-scale cultural systems can be seen as part of an intellectual trend, comparable in significant respects to Samuel Huntington's influential 'Clash of Civilizations' thesis. In a world that is undergoing tectonic shifts in the distribution of wealth, power, and hegemony, such preoccupations are understandable. In these circumstances, it would be surprising if the partisans of Anglospheric and Sinospheric cultural traditions were not aroused to ardent advocacy of their relative merits and demerits, and -- if Bennett is taken seriously -- such discussions will take place in zones of cultural communion that are, at least relatively, increasingly introverted. The rapid emergence of a highly-autonomous 'Chinese Internet' in recent years adds weight to such expectations.

In March, the Z/Yen Group released the ninth in its series of Global Financial Centres Index rankings, in which Shanghai leapt to shared fifth place with Tokyo (on GFCI ratings of 694). London (775), New York (769), Hong Kong (759), and Singapore (722) led the pack. (The top 75 can be seen here).

Both Anglosphereans and Sinosphereans can find ready satisfaction in these ratings. The persistent supremacy of London and New York attests to a 250-year history of world

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economic dominance, whilst the ascent of Chinese-ethnicity commercial cities to the remaining top
shift of economic gravity to the western Pacific region. Yet the most interesting pattern lies in-betw
Singapore belong unambiguously to a Sinosphere (still less to a broad Anglosphere). Instead, they a
forms of Chinese-Anglophone hybridity – an immensely successful cultural synthesis. It would be d
Shanghai was entirely untouched by a comparable phenomenon, inherited in that case from the syn
concession-era International Settlement, and reflected in its singular Haipai or 'ocean culture'.

The existence of an identifiable Sino-Anglosphere – or Singlosphere – is further suggested by the H
Index of Economic Freedom (rated on a scale of 0-100). On that list, the top two places are taken by H
Singapore (87.2), followed by Australia (82.5) and New Zealand (82.3). The Anglospherean and Sinc
less impressively, with none meeting the Heritage criteria for free economies -- the United States co
Kingdom 16th (74.5), and mainland China 135th (52.0). It seems that the Singlosphere has learnt so
freedom that exceeds the presently-manifested wisdom of both cultural root-stocks – setting a mod
leaving the Anglosphere trailing in its wake.

As the deep secular trend of Chinese ascent and (relative if not absolute) American decline leads to
and threats of geostrategic tension, it is especially important to note a quite different, non-confron
cultural merging and reciprocal liberation. Within the Singlosphere, an emergent, synthetic ethnicit
adaptive, cosmopolitan competence without peer, as distinct traditions of spontaneous order fuse a
Adam Smith meets Laozi, and the profound amalgamation of the two results in an unfolding innova
dominates world rankings of economic capability.

A remarkable study by Christian Gerla
of European laissez-faire (or wu wei) ic
maverick Murray Rothbard was attract
Chinese Libertarian Tradition'. Ken McC
Laissez-Faire. (Those disturbed by this
comfortable with Silja Graupe's leftist

McCormick concludes his essay:

The recent ascendance of free-market
probably owes more to the practical h
than to the persuasiveness of any the
might speculate that the startling suc
in the People's Republic of China migh
fact that the idea of free markets is en
fact, the Confucianism that long dominated China was actually a synthesis of competing schools of
Hence, while laissez-faire has frequently been absent from Chinese practice, it is not at all alien to
free-market reforms in China might therefore be interpreted not so much as an importation of a fo
reawakening of a home-grown concept.

The Singlosphere sets both East and West on the right track. The more that Shanghai recalls and le
its participation -- the faster its ascent will be.

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